

RAC Meeting
November 9, 2004
0900-1700

Attendance: BLM Members-K Lynn Bennett, Howard Hedrick, Andy Payne, Bill Baker, Windy Reynolds, Rick VanderVoet, Bernie Jansen, Sky Buffat, Beckie Wagoner
RAC Members- Marc Brackett, Debbie Dane, Joe Tugaw, Mel Quale, Scott Boettger, Virginia Ricketts, Travis Thompson, Michael Tylka, Sr., Kelly Adams, Tom Faulkner, Yvette Tuell, Jake Zollinger, Dennis Crane, Ken Sanders

Absent: BLM Member-Chris Simonson RAC Member-Bud Bedke

The meeting started off with Howard welcoming everyone and then everyone giving brief introductions and backgrounds.

Howard then introduced K Lynn and he added to the welcome, gave a brief history of RAC and its "vital role":

- “front line to public contact”
- used for statewide issues
- help with policies/procedures

Then K Lynn covered some of the meeting requirements:

- A minimum of once annually (but suggested a minimum of 3 annually)
- bringing issues to the agenda by contacting Howard with a 30 day advance notice

Cooperative Contribution:

- ensure Federal Agencies use RAC input and ideas
- RAC's voice will be used on decisions

New and Old issues:

1. Sage Grouse-ongoing and will take awhile before it is decided whether they will become listed or not

>we are trying to get conservation measures rather than having the service list the birds

>BLM concerns:

- ~habitat
- ~providing grazing to the permenties
- ~providing economic stability for the community

We will coordinate with Fish and Game for a full plan to cover all areas including hunting & habitat.

2. Energy Development-continuing

- ~Wind-3 proposals working
- ~other proposals on the table
- ~Brown Bench-issued right-of-way

3. Off-Highway Vehicles

- ~rules –we need to protect resources
- ~major issues across the West
- ~population growth

4. Standards & Guides

5. Permittie issues

6. Grazing Regulations-new release pending

7. Owyhee Initiative- part of it falls into the TFD now.

* “BLM is not a party at the table, we will attend for support, provide maps, information, and resource data. We don't participate in the decision, BLM is neutral.”

Howard went over the History & Background of the BLM Districts:

- started with 6 districts
- mid 90's we dropped to 3 districts
- Oct 2004 we added the TFDO
 - ~strategic location

~Magic valley is centrally located
 ~good diversity of people in the area
 ~all types of resources

Uses on land:

- wind energy
- coal plant
- recreation
- illegal (working with Law Enforcement)
 - >meth labs

Our District Office will provide:

- better public service
- less travel for others to get to a BLM office

Field offices within the district:

- Shoshone
- Burley
- Jarbridge
- Tanker Base-recently built at the Twin Falls airport

Fire Guard Stations: (smaller areas)

- Rogerson
- Bellevue
- Kimama
- Carey (building)
- Malta

* Also pre-positioned engines in some rural areas

The district office is temporarily located at 378 Falls Ave in Twin Falls. There are plans to collocate with the Forest Service and Jarbridge FO in 3 years.

Burley will also combine with Minidoka in the future.

RAC was created in the 1970's but it was then called the Multiple Use Advisory Council. Charter 1995 – Grazing Regulations, has 3 main categories:

1. Community/Commodity
2. Environmental/History/Wild horse
3. Native Representatives/Local & State Government/ Public-At-large

*3 representatives from each category must be present to make a recommendation.

Meetings:

- have to be sent to the Federal Register 30 days prior with the following information:
 - >time
 - >location (can be other towns)
 - >tentative agenda
 - >time for public comments

Bill Baker-Jarbridge FO then covered what is going on in his section:

Stats:

- 1.3 mil acres
- Permit renewals
 - >2/3 of the field work is done, 70% of allotment
 - >67 allotments issued and 34 are completed
 - >Standards & Guidelines – should be done by 2009 with the final decisions done the end of 2008.

- Saylor Creek Wild Horse Reservation Butte –meeting with the Air Force
- Western Boundary Acres-are of environmental concern

Changes because of new DO added:

- Birds of Prey-fall into the Boise District now
- Craters is all in Shoshone District now

Grazing Issues:

- cheat grass
- crested wheat grass
- fire suppression
- slick spot pepper grass

Other Issues:

- Wind energy proposal west of Rogerson
- camping on critical habitat
- Snake River Snails
- FOIA
- Lawsuits- 6 biological assessments
 - >60's-90's we had tremendous fires
 - >we reseeded the burnt land to crest wheatgrass
 - >it provided more forage
 - >ranching operations changed due to seedings
 - >the permits were non-renewable
 - >no more temporary permits are issued
 - >appeals were made

Environmental assessments were done-the EA's were challenged by Western Watershed Projects

- EA's are required for permanent conversion
- *our goal is to protect the resources & provide for the economic sustainability of the community

Andy Payne-Shoshone FO: (2 mil + acres)

Stats:

- 2/3 through SG assessments
- on schedule with allotments
- large number of acres is of cheatgrass
- 1/4m acres sagebrush
- 100-200,000 acres fire rehab
- 75,000 acres restoration

Workloads:

- RMP ~ start 2005
- OHV issues
- Permittees
- recreation~ North Rim
 - >lease signed with Jerome Co.
 - >1 mil visitors per year (mostly for Bald Mtn)
 - >OHV issues
 - >minerals work ~ Blaine Co.
 - old mines
 - new development possibilities
 - daily construction
 - >gravel
 - >dirt
 - land exchange

*main workloads in Blaine & Camas County's

-energy

>Sempra Co. coal fire proposal

>temporary permits for access

Fire Management Direction Plan:

-EIS to look at all the fuels

-copy to RAC members

Bernie Jansen- Operations Manager:

Stats:

-5 engines

-4 equipment operators

-3 range technicians

-hazmat specialist

-3 geography information specialists

*we do all engine work & maintenance within the facilities.

Guard Base Status:

-Carey-share

-Bellevue-share

-Malta-share

Engineering Shop does:

-road work

-maintenance

~ roads

>our crew

>contracted

~culverts

>our crew

>contracted

Equipment Operators:

-lay pipe

-spring developments

-cattle guards

-graders ~ contracted

-dozers ~ contracted

*we borrow graders from Salt Lake if needed

Fire Rehabilitation Crew:

-fences

>burnt from fires

>newly constructed areas

-seeding

-rock

-help FO rewrite plans

-help FO with weed control

>treated 4,000 acres this year

>contracted another 30-60,000 acres out

*help Shoshone FO and starting to help Jarbidge FO

Hazmat Specilist:

-takes care of dumped chemicals

-meth labs

Information Crew (3-4 people)

-maps
-data

Signs:

-help put out
-help determine where to put them

Recreation:

-redo water systems
-restore deterioration
-put up cattle guards
-road maintenance

Fire & Aviation –Sky Buffat (filling in for Chris Simonson)

Stats:

-168 firefighters, not including Operations Supervisors and higher; total well over 200 people in TFD Fire Program
-22 heavy engines, 13 light
-4 water tenders
-2 Single Engine Air Tankers
-a helicopter
-an air attack plane
-Seven guard stations for 2005 (including new facilities in Carey & Kimama)
*All this makes TFD Fire and Aviation the largest federal firefighting program in the lower 48 states

Burned just less than 1,900 acres total during 2004 season, 1,300 of which were BLM acres

1994-2004 ten year average: 120 fires with 63,000 acres burned
compared to 1991-2001 average of 150 fires per year with 90,000 acres burned

In 2004, for fires in 2003, have collected nearly \$30,000 from private individuals and organizations

Biggest claim to fame in Fire and Aviation is the Fuels Program

-In 2004, there were 11,000 acres of prescribed burning completed
-Over 88,000 total acres treated for 2004 season
-Completed in typical sage/ grass and also aspen or more forested areas to the north
*comparison: Other states and districts good year to complete 8-10,000 acres total

*Also completed 100% of targeted inventory and monitoring, totaling 276,000 acres

Rural Fire Assistance Program is a result of National Fire Plan, which came after the devastating fire season of 2000 and now allows us more ability to best suppress and prevent wildfires
-\$168,000 distributed in 2004 to 33 Rural Fire Departments in the 10 counties in TFD used for training, communications, equipment, etc.
-RFD's as a result do respond to approximately 80% of wildfires in Magic, Wood River and Mini-Cassia valleys

*We also work with county Sheriff's Depts. to perform patrols within their jurisdiction using off duty deputies, benefiting counties and preventing fire or other illegal activity better than BLM could otherwise

*Other significant event in 2004: Twin Falls Air Attack Base opened, with first heavy air tanker loaded out of TF Airport

Rick VanderVoet- Craters of the Moon:

*4 years ago President Clinton expanded Craters of the Moon and made it a National Monument

General Information:

- it is 1 of 15 National Monuments
- part of a natural system
- co-managed with National Park Service

Draft Management Plan:

- took 3 years to make it
- incurred lots of snags
 - >9/11
 - >computer shut down
- held workshops
- open houses
- a lot of public involvement
- not much response (summary of CRMO DEIS comment letters handout)

*Fort Hall held workshops and open house, still waiting on letter to return

Monument visitors are around 10,000 per year~ trying to get a visitor survey

Who visits Craters?

- livestock permittees
- research/operations
- visitors

Restoration:

- healthy population of sage grouse
- expand on healthy habitat
- find out how to restore the sagebrush ecosystem
- looking at partnering with outside places to promote

Grazing:

- no changes to grazing proposed by the plan
- prefer to manage grazing by allotments
- plan includes:
 - >vegetation goals
 - >sage grouse
 - >livestock growth

*becoming a monument closed it to cross country vehicle use

In 1920 the Visitor Center was built, at that time there were lava bombs and hollow rocks all around the VC. Today it is all gone due to people taking these things with them when they leave.

Next book should be released in Jan-Feb 2005 it will then have a 60 day review, a 30 day protest, and when it is resolved it will become record.

Currently working on improving the sign network to focus on making it easier to find Craters and keep people on good roads.

The National Park Service is undergoing construction on VC, hoping to get 200,000 visitors a year they have redone all exhibits, updated and expanded the monument.

There is lots of research is going on:

- sage grouse
- fire
- cheat grass
- wheat studies
- geological mapping
- Volcanic assessment –due for eruption

*Science Symposium scheduled for Oct 6-9, 2005 ~ joint effort with Idaho Science Teachers Association. Expecting 400 attendees (flyer handed out)

Wendy Reynolds-Burley FO:

Wind Energy Proposal-current proposal from Windland Inc.

- proposal on Federal lands
 - >proposing to build across Cottrell Ridge Line about 16 miles of approximately 90-130 wind towers (1 tower approx 40 stories high), spacing of about 500ft apart.
- we are evaluating wind energy on the environment
- so far this is the largest line on Federal land
- it would be within the sage grouse habitat~ concerns:
 - >the grouse fly higher then we thought-high enough to hit the blades of the towers
 - >visibility
 - >proximity to Albion
 - >access
 - >recreation
 - >truck trip generations to maintain buildings and build
- wind has been tested by anemometers for the past 3 years
- we are working on producing a draft EIS ~ hoping for draft by late spring
- 5 cooperating agencies make up a task team
 1. US Wildlife Service
 2. Bonneville Power
 3. Idaho Fish & Game
 4. Cassia Co.
 5. BLM

*Final decision is made by Deputy Director of BLM

2 major questions:

1. Do we amend the resource management plan?
2. Finding out whom to grant the Right-of-Way

*bigger problem is road construction for semi's to bring the equipment in.

The original proposal wanted to come in the South and leave via the North route

- a lot of construction constrains
- projecting 3 years construction window
- also will add a batch plant

Mitigation to include these issues also how it will affect grazing permittees

Research shows us that only 2% of birds fly within the blade area of the towers
 The land is predominately BLM land, only 2 small pieces are state land for this proposal.
 The springs have been charted so they won't be impacted by the blasting to put the towers in

City of Rocks/Castle Rocks:

- BLM doing EA's to see if it should permit bolted climbing management plan
- working with Idaho Power to upgrade transmission lines from American Falls to Hunt

Housekeeping- Sky Buffat

- BLM State of Idaho RAC Charter
 - >objective
 - >training
 - >subgroups
 - >meetings

Howard then reviewed the topics that were discussed throughout the meeting and what RAC is.

- RAC duties
- RAC involvement
- agenda for upcoming meetings
- officer elections

The **RAC** then talked amongst themselves.

- Kelly Adams covered
 - >previous RAC meeting policies
 - >meetings with just members vs. with BLM
 - >elections
 - ~all members are equal
 - ~chair is the representative but not a step higher or better
 - ~everyone has an equal say
- Ken Sanders then added that the meetings are more effective with structure from a chair as opposed to just open meetings.
- Dennis Crane moved to elect officials-RAC agreed
- Joe Tugaw nominated Kelly Adams for Chair
- Michael Tylka Sr. second
- motion passed Kelly was made Chair of the RAC
- Travis Thompson then nominated Dennis Crane for the position of Vice-chair
- Dennis declined (didn't have the time) and nominated Tom Faulkner instead it was 2nd and passed. Tom became Vice-chair.

Subgroups were formed:

- Craters ~ Mel Quale (chair), Debbie Dane, Scott Boettger, & other public recommended
- FMDA ~ Tom Faulkner (chair), Kelly Adams, Yvette Tuell, Dennis Crane, Marc Brackett, Jake Zollinger
 - >First meeting-January 11th at Shoshone FO-further arrangements to be arranged through Tom and Sky.
- T & E ~ Scott Boettger (chair), Jake Zollinger, Yvette Tuell, Marc Brackett, Travis Thompson, and other public recommended.

*Dennis Crane is interested in a wild horse subgroup for the future

Agenda items to focus on for the next year:

- Craters & FMDA subgroup reports
- Sage grouse State plan (subgroup report)
- Yvette Tuell-tribal perspective at Feb meeting

- Wild horses as timely
- Energy Development (ex-Semptra & Cotterel Draft EIS)
 - >group interested in proponent presentations for these projects

Needs:

- Set yahoo Group for the RAC
- listing of different projects and offices involved to get proper mailing list set up per interests
- Copies of FMDA books sent to RAC
- Check on Subgroup meetings needing to published in Fed register
- Federal Register notice for Feb Meeting
- follow up package to RAC members containing:
 - >map of TFDO
 - >updated rack list
 - >BLM contact list